



January 2023 Newsletter

In December, our President, Rabbi Joshua Lesser, joined with 12 rabbis from around the country on a humanitarian mission at the El Paso/Juarez border led by HIAS and T'ruah.

Reflecting on his experience, Rabbi Joshua said:

"This issue is vitally important to me as an American rabbi who is the grandson of refugees. My tradition emphasizes the dignity we must offer those seeking asylum. And our collective Jewish history, including my own personal story, reminds me of the struggles my family and others endured as they fled their homes in the face of persecution.

The humane treatment of those fleeing cataclysmic circumstances should be our logical response. Rather than something to be feared, what I saw were courageous human beings seeking safety and a better life for their families in the face of incredible tragedy. I witnessed people working dedicatedly in a system failing everyone.

As the co-founder of Bridges Faith Initiative, a non-profit that organizes faith voices to advocate for civilian security around the globe paired with compassionate immigration policies, I know that caring for the refugee, those most vulnerable, is a commandment that unites most religious traditions. And as a rabbi, it is how I honor my family that escaped and resettled in the U.S. and remember my family that did not and perished.

In a moment where fear-inducing coverage of the crisis at the border creates a lack of dignity, we must vigorously advocate for the right to asylum. Rather than something to be feared, what I saw were courageous human beings seeking safety and a better life for their families in the face of incredible tragedy. I witnessed people working dedicatedly in a system failing everyone. With the implementation of draconian policies and insufficient funding, we are ill-equipped to respond.

After seeing the needs at the border, it was appalling to hear President Biden announce an expansion of the Title 42 expulsion policy and expel almost all Haitians, Venezuelans,

Nicaraguans, and Cubans that come to the border. With the policies announced on January 6th only a very few asylum seekers from these countries who have means and access to a passport and an airline ticket will be able to enter the U.S. In addition to expanding the Title 42 expulsion policy, President Biden declared that he is planning to revamp the Trump Era transit ban where asylum seekers will be banned from the United States if they passed a third country. This Trump Era policy was directly responsible for separating families."

What We Are Working On

BFI is advocating with the Biden Administration and Congress to ensure that the proposed reenactment of the Trump Era Ban is stopped. [You can join us by taking action TODAY.](#)

We cannot continue this work without funding. We ask for your donations in order to provide our advocates with the resources they need to push back against the harmful and appalling anti-immigrant policies and support asylum seekers.

Donate

Thank you for reading, giving, and taking action with us.

Rabbi Joshua Lesser
and the BFI Team

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